

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 2183

HA FOR ASST SECRETARY

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: ASST SECRETARY DERIAN'S MEETING WITH THE UNHCR
REGIONAL REP

1. SUMMARY. MS DERIAN MET JAN 16 WITH LESLIE A. GOODYEAR, UNHCR REGIONAL REP FOR WESTERN SOUTH ASIA. THEY PRINCIPALLY DISCUSSED TWO TOPICS: FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN THE SONGKHLA BOAT CASE CAMP, AND THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEES IN THAI INLAND CAMPS. END SUMMARY.
2. MS DERIAN OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY COMMENTING THAT SHE HAD LEARNED THAT REFUGEES IN THE SONGKHLA BOAT CASE CAMP HAD HAD NO FOOD FOR 7 OF THE LAST 14 DAYS. THE THAI WERE BLAMING THE SITUATION ON DELAY IN UNHCR PAYMENTS. MR GOODYEAR SAID THAT THE PROBLEM WAS ARREARS IN RTG PAYMENTS TO RICE CONTRACTORS. THE UNHCR GIVES THE RTG 10 MILLION BAHT (\$500,000) WHENEVER THE RTG HAS SPENT 80 PERCENT OF ITS PREVIOUS ALLOTMENT. THE UNHCR HAD GIVEN THE RTG ENOUGH MONEY SINCE
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MID-DECEMBER TO BUY RICE THROUGH MARCH, BUT THE RTG HAD USED THE FUNDS TO PAY ITS BACKLOG OF DEBTS TO CONTRACTORS.

3. MS DERIAN COMMENTED THAT THE CHILDREN IN THE CAMP ARE IN A CRUCIAL PERIOD OF DEVELOPMENT. OTHERS WHO HAD BEEN THROUGH A LOT TO GET TO THE CAMP

NEED NOURISHMENT. MS DERIAN SUGGESTED THAT THE UNHCR MIGHT WANT TO STATION SOMEONE IN EACH REFUGEE CAMP. MR GOODYEAR SAID THAT THERE WERE 15 CAMPS IN THAILAND, AND HE CURRENTLY HAD FOUR FIELD PERSONNEL COVERING THEM. HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO PUT A MAN IN EACH CAMP BUT WOULD CONTINUE TO PUT PRESSURE IN AN EVEN MORE INTENSIVE FASHION ON THE RTG TO KEEP FOOD SUPPLIES CURRENT.

4. MR GOODYEAR COMMENTED THAT WHILE THE BOAT SITUATION WAS DRAMATIC, THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEES IN INLAND CAMPS WAS A MORE SERIOUS LONG-TERM PROBLEM. MS DERIAN ASKED WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO LAND ENTRANTS SINCE NOV 15. MR GOODYEAR SAID THAT ABOUT 1,500 HAD COME IN, AND WERE SCATTERED IN VARIOUS THAI JAILS AND IN THREE NEW THAI CAMPS. MANY OTHERS MAY HAVE GONE BACK, PERHAPS VOLUNTARILY AFTER SOME PERSUASION.

5. MS DERIAN ASKED WHY THE UNHCR AGREED TO THE NOV 15 ARRANGEMENTS. MR GOODYEAR REPLIED THAT THE WAR HAS BEEN OVER FOR TWO AND A HALF YEARS, AND THAT THE PROCEDURE OF DISTINGUISHING TYPES OF REFUGEES WAS A SUSAL ONE WHEN EMERGENCIES HAD ENDED.

6. HE SAID THAT HE HAS EMPHASIZED TO THE THAI THAT REPATRIATION WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION TO CAMBODIA OR VIETNAM.
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IF GUARANTEES COULD BE WORKED OUT WITH THE LAO GOVT THAT RETURNEES WOULD NOT BE HARMED, THERE MAY BE SOME POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE REPATRIATION TO LAOS, HOWEVER. WHAT HE OBJECTED TO WAS THE LACK OF UNHCR PARTICIPATION IN THE RTG DECISION ABOUT WHO IS A REFUGEE. HE SAID THAT THE THAI TOLD THE UNHCR THAT THAILAND IS A SOVEREIGN COUNTRY. THERE CAN BE NO FOREIGN PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION BECAUSE SUCH AN ACTION WOULD SMACK OF CONSULAR COURTS.
WHITEHOUSE

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